

October 4, 2007

New Advisory Opinions

On September 27, 2007, the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board met and adopted the new advisory opinion summarized below. Click on the AO number to read the full text of the opinion.

2007-11, Discounts on Dues and Seminar Fees Made Available to All Government Employees by Non-Restricted Donors

The Board concluded that: (1) three professional organizations whose memberships include a small percentage (less than 17 percent) of restricted donors are not themselves considered restricted donors for purposes of the gift provisions of the Code of Ethics for Public Officials, and (2) the Insurance Department may accept discounts on dues and seminar fees made available by those professional organizations/non-restricted donors.

Question of the Month

With the coming of autumn, many professional and educational organizations get back to their regular meeting schedules. Some of them ask state employees and public officials to participate or speak at events, so the following question is likely to arise:

Whether a state employee or public official who is prohibited from accepting a fee or honorarium for "an article, appearance or speech, or for participation at an event, in his [or her] official capacity" may nevertheless direct that the fee or honorarium be donated to a charity of his or her choice.

The answer is yes, so long as the state employee or public official does not receive any charitable deduction or other financial benefit.

Also, the state employee or public official may request that the fee or honorarium be donated to his or her state department or agency. The only caveat is that the funds may not be directed to an account that is within the state employee's control and that may result in his or her personal financial benefit.

New OSE Liaison Contact

Meredith Trimble will be out of the office on maternity leave beginning August 27, 2007. Until Meredith's return, please contact OSE's General Counsel, Barbara Housen, with all requests for in-person training. I can be reached at: 860-566-4472 x424; Barbara.housen@ct.gov. Please direct all other requests (for legal opinions, educational materials, liaison changes, etc.) to Diane Buxo at: 860-566-4472 x431; diane.buxo@ct.gov.

Sincerely,

Barbara Housen
General Counsel
Office of State Ethics